Finding a Youth Partner

Before starting, it may be helpful to think about what your ideal youth partner would be like. Where is your ideal youth partner organization located? Are your youth participants already established as a group or are you creating a new group? How will responsibility balance between your project and your ideal youth partner? How involved is your ideal youth partner in the *Roadmap* process? Are they helping to acquire funding and/or supplies? Are they assisting with behavior management and/or offering incentives for participation? Try to be as detailed and specific as possible.

Create an information packet and prepare an "elevator speech"

Creating a general set of documents that includes information about the *Roadmap* and describes your vision of the partnership and the CE process can help make sure that you and your youth partner are on the same page from the very beginning of the process. Possible contents for an informative packet could include:

⇨ Flyer for Potential Youth Partners (available on the CE Atlas)

⇨ Project-specific brochure or flyer that includes reflections from previous youth participants, information and/or pictures from past youth service projects, etc.

⇨ Articles or news items from local media sources about past youth CE projects

⇨ Possible schedule, including how often and how long CE meetings would be, possible project date(s), and how flexible the schedule is

⇨ Proposal including partner, project, and member responsibilities and expectations; intended outcomes; and any "non-negotiables" you may have regarding the partnership

You may not need to give an entire packet to all potential partners, particularly if you have already established a relationship with the organization. However, having a full set of general documents ready can make it easier to start from scratch with any organization. It can also help you organize an "elevator speech" about the CE process. Like the information packet, your speech should include:

⇨ A brief explanation of what the *Roadmap* is and what the process looks like

⇨ Highlights and successes from previous youth projects

⇨ A brief outline of proposed scheduling, youth partner responsibilities, and project responsibilities

Develop a list of potential partners

Potential youth partners can include a wide variety of organizations, including:

⇨ Schools, either in classroom settings (e.g. leadership, civic, history, or ELL/ESL classes) or in before- or after-school programs

⇨ Already established youth groups (e.g. Boy/Girl Scouts or church youth groups)

⇨ Community, youth, or teen centers

⇨ Nearly any organization that works consistently with middle-school aged youth

Establish and maintain clear, consistent communication with potential partners

Start your initial contact with potential partners early in the program year even if you don't plan to facilitate the curriculum until spring. Working through all of the logistics will take time, and you may need the extra time to work through possible challenges. To get started:

⇨ Prioritize your list of potential partners and start contacting those that come closest to your ideal youth partner first. It is usually better to make initial contacts in person or on the phone and then follow-up with mail or e-mail.

⇨ Choose one or two people from your project and/or members to be the primary liaison(s) with the potential partner. Preferably, the primary contact person would remain consistent throughout the facilitation of the *Roadmap*.

⇨ Utilize the Youth Partner Site Worksheet to keep track of potential partners, the communication you've had with them, and the information you have about them.

⇨ Clearly communicate all of the expectations you have of your youth partner and clarify the roles of the youth partner and your project. Be sure to discuss issues such as: space to facilitate the curriculum, what supplies can be provided by your youth partner, how youth participants will be recruited, transportation of youth participants (if necessary), and any guidelines or restrictions on the service project (such as scheduling or restrictions based on liability issues).

⇨ As you move forward in communicating with potential partners, utilize the Questions to Consider & Issues to Discuss with your Partner Agency to make sure all necessary logistical issues are clarified.